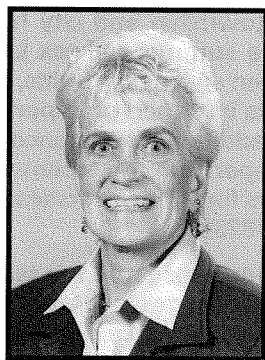


# Hammerstrom's

for the people  
in the 17th Senate District

# Hotline



State Senator

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February 9, 2004



**FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH** According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the leading cause of death among Americans and is a leading cause of premature, permanent disability. Along with the anguish to families, cardiovascular disease, which includes heart disease, also causes a severe financial toll, estimated at \$12.3 billion in Michigan alone. Recent studies show a significant and troubling increase in childhood obesity, putting even our children at a greater risk for developing this deadly disease. Fortunately, many risk factors for heart disease such as smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes, can be controlled through lifestyle changes. For more information about heart disease and tips for living healthier, please visit my website at [www.senate.michigan.gov/hammerstrom](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/hammerstrom).

**DID YOU KNOW?** The economic effects of cardiovascular disease on the U.S. health care system grow larger as the population ages. In 2003, the cost of heart disease and stroke is projected to be \$351 billion: \$209 billion for health care expenditures and \$142 billion for lost productivity from death and disability.

**DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY ANNOUNCES CHANGES FOR 2004 TAX SEASON** The Michigan Department of Treasury has implemented several changes this year in an effort to be more efficient, reduce costs, and enhance the state's individual income tax filing process. One of the most important changes for the new tax season involves electronic filing of individual income tax returns. E-filing has experienced a significant growth in popularity over the years. In fact, more than 1.7 million Michigan taxpayers filed their 2002 income tax returns electronically and Treasury expects another 1 million taxpayers to do so this year. The Department of Treasury now requires tax professionals who prepare and submit more than 200 Michigan income tax returns to file the returns electronically. As a result of the increased popularity of the e-file option and reductions in its operating budget, Treasury has also reduced the number of tax booklets, forms, and instructions that have been distributed across the state. Taxpayers can access all 2003 Michigan Income Tax forms and instructions on the Department of Treasury's website at [www.michigan.gov/treasury](http://www.michigan.gov/treasury).

**HELPFUL TAX GUIDES AVAILABLE** 2004 Michigan Taxpayer's Guides are now available at township and city halls, libraries, post offices, and senior centers throughout the 17th District. The booklet includes a summary of tax laws, including state regulations on property taxes, homestead property tax credits, farmland and open space tax credits, and the Single Business Tax. The guides are distributed every year in an effort to keep constituents informed of important changes that are necessary to file taxes correctly. A sample tax form and phone numbers for additional assistance are also included. Property owners also may wish to pick up "How to Effectively Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment." This helpful publication provides valuable information as well as the names and phone numbers for Property Assessors in your area. To request a copy of either publication, please call my office toll-free at (888) 477-8238.

**MDOT URGES EXTREME CARE WHILE SHARING ROAD WITH SNOW PLOWS** As Michigan continues to be the target for heavy snowfall this month, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) encourages motorists to reduce their speed and exercise caution when approaching a snow plow. A fully loaded snow plow can weigh up to 20 tons and plow operators require extra space to perform their winter maintenance work safely and efficiently. For safe winter travel, MDOT suggests that motorists maintain a safe distance from snow plows, merge into traffic slowly since sudden movements can cause vehicles to slide, accelerate and brake slowly and avoid abrupt steering maneuvers, and allow plenty of time to reach your destination.

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You can read future issues of Hammerstrom's Hotline on my website at  
[www.senate.michigan.gov/hammerstrom/news/Hotline.htm](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/hammerstrom/news/Hotline.htm).